

No 16 K Feilding (H)
M U R D E R S.

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*True Examples of the Interposition of Providence, in the
Discovery and Punishment of M U R D E R.*



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TRUE EXAMPLES
OF THE
Interposition of Providence,
IN THE
DISCOVERY AND PUNISHMENT OF
MURDER.

(By that famous Magistrate, Mr. Justice Fielding.)

A Man was taken up on suspicion of Murder, but when brought to the Bar, the evidence appeared not strong enough to convict him. He pretended to be quite easy about the matter, and behaved with great boldness, because he knew there was no witness to the fact, for he had really committed the Murder, and had taken every caution to prevent a discovery; making use of all that care and prudence which are always much sharpened by a sense of guilt, though they have



have hardly ever been known to answer the end; some one circumstance being generally overlooked, by the permission of Divine Providence, in order to lead to a sure, though perhaps distant discovery. Sooner or later all sin comes to light.

When he came upon his trial, the Judge observed in the Man's countenance an uneasiness, terror, and confusion, which all his pretended boldness, and protestations of innocence could not hide. This much increased his suspicion, and he therefore kept his eye steadily fixed on his face during the whole time. As soon as the last witness was dismissed, the Man asked with pretended coolness, if they had any more evidence to produce against him. The Judge fixed his eyes sternly upon his face, and in a very solemn manner asked him this question. Friend, do you not yourself know that one *could* appear against you, whose evidence would put the matter out of all doubt?—At this the Man started, looked extremely terrified, and eagerly cried out—"My Lord, he is not a legal witness, no Man can speak in

his own cause, nor was the wound I gave him half so large, as what he shews against me".

The Judge who had a very deep knowledge of human nature, presently perceived by the Man's starting, and the wildness and terror of his look, that he was the real Murderer, and that in the distraction of a guilty conscience his imagination had raised up to his mind the Ghost of the Murdered Man. The Judge therefore acting upon such a reasonable supposition, talked to the prisoner accordingly. By his farther examination, he soon brought him to confess that he had been guilty of the Murder for which he was now tried; though as was said above, he had made sure of being acquitted, because he knew no human witness could be brought to appear against him. But the justice of God made his own conscience his accuser. After this full confession of the fact, he was condemned, and hanged in chains, at the very place where he declared the Murder had been committed. At his death he confessed that his guilty conscience was so haunted

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ed with the crime, that upon his trial he verily believed the Ghost of the Murdered Man had stood before him with a wound, twice as large as that which he had given him.

Account of Another MURDER.

(Recorded by the same AUTHOR.)

A Gentleman in good circumstances was so desperately wicked as to murder his Friend, a Man in business near Bow-Church in Cheapside; and with such aggravated circumstances of malice, revenge, and cruelty, as made it impossible for him to expect any mercy, if his crime should ever be found out. He therefore made his escape into France, where he lived for some years, and began to fancy that he was quite safe; but GOD's thoughts are not as our thoughts, and the voice of blood will be heard by Almighty vengeance sooner or later. But from the horrors of his guilty conscience, which almost every night presented before his Eyes, whether sleeping or

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waking, his murdered Friend, he felt tenfold the punishment which by flight he had vainly hoped to escape.

After twenty years residence, or rather wandering abroad, through most parts of Europe, (for his mind was not quiet enough to let him live long in the same place) he resolved to return back into England.—He changed his name, and as time and change of climate had altered his person, he doubted not but he might in some retired part of the Country, wear out the remainder of his days, and perhaps recover that peace of mind which he had there left behind him.

But public Justice though slow at last overtook him; for the very evening that he landed in a Wherry at Queen-Hithe-Stairs, as he was walking up Cheapside in order to get into a Coach, just in the dusk, and by the very door of his Murdered Friend, he heard a voice cry “stop him, stop him, there he is”.—On this he ran as fast as he was able, and soon found himself followed by a great Mob. He was soon overtaken and seized; on which he cried out with extreme terror—“I confess

fess the fact ; I am the Man that did it”.

The Mob hereupon said, as he had confessed the crime they would immediately proceed to execution, and after they had made him refund the stolen goods, they would give him the discipline of pumping, dragging him through the kennel and the like. On this he said he had stolen nothing, for though he had murdered Mr. L. yet he had no intention of robbing his house.

By this unexpected answer the Mob found themselves mistaken ; for they were pursuing a pick-pocket, and seeing this Man run hard, they concluded him to be the pick-pocket : and now they were for letting him go as a person distracted that knew not what he said. One man however who had long lived in that neighbourhood, and heard of the Murder of Mr. L. so long ago, desired the strange Gentleman might be examined before a Magistrate. He was accordingly carried before the Lord Mayor, who took his confession of the fact for which he was soon after hanged. He declared at the Gallows that

that disgraceful as his punishment was, yet the day of his execution was the happiest he had known since he committed that horrid, treacherous, and inhuman act, the murder of a Friend who loved him, and to whom he had the highest obligations.

Account of Another MURDER.

(Recorded by the same AUTHOR.)

IN Leicestershire not far from Lutterworth, lived a Miller, who having a grudge against a man, had murdered him in his Mill, and privately buried him in his Garden. Not long after he had committed this horrid crime, the Miller found means to change his place of abode, and settled in another country a great way off. Here he lived a long time, believing that his villainy would never be discovered; but this hardened wretch did not reflect that though no fellow-creature saw him, GOD did, and that though God is patient and long-suffering, he seldom fails to bring wicked actions

actions to light in this world, and never fails to punish them in the next. Twenty years had now passed over his head in safety, and he thought he might without any danger venture to return to visit some old friends in the village where he had formerly lived. All is now safe thought he, and it is impossible the old story should be ever brought to light.

Just at the very time while he was on this visit in his native village, by the Providence of God, the Miller who had present possession of the Mill; having occasion to dig uncommonly deep in his Garden, found the Body, or rather the Bones of the Murdered Man.--The neighbours then recollected that about twenty years ago, a Man had been missing in the Parish, and was never heard of after. Some likewise recollected who was then owner of the Mill, and that very Miller being now in the Parish, they all ran to the house where he was, and surrounding it called on him as the Murderer of the Person whose bones had been thus providentially discovered. The wretched Miller was so shocked

shocked and confounded with the sudden and general accusation; and Conscience which had slept for twenty years, was now so horribly stung, that he soon confessed the Fact, was tried, found guilty, and executed according to his just deserts.

The following observations of this wise and famous Magistrate, being, unhappily, just as well suited to the present time, as the time when that great Man wrote them, I hope they may be useful to my Readers.

That the most dreadful crime of Murder, hath of late years increased in a very deplorable degree in this kingdom, is a fact which every Man must confess, and which every good Man must very bitterly lament. Till this age indeed, cruel and bloody actions were so seldom heard of in England that when they happened, they appeared as prodigies, and raised not only the astonishment, but the abhorrence of the People.—Murder is but very lately begun to be common among us.

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For my part I sincerely declare I can discover no more than one cause of the horrid evil of which I am complaining—ONE indeed perfectly capable of producing every mischief, and which hath more than all other causes contributed to produce, and to increase all the evils with which the public is at present so extremely afflicted.

My sensible Reader will presently guess what I mean.—I mean that general NEGLECT, I fear I may say CONTEMPT OF RELIGION, which hath within these few years, so fatally overspread this whole Kingdom, till it has reached the very lowest ranks of Men?—It cannot be otherwise, for when we think of the solemn threatenings of ALMIGHTY GOD against the crime of Murder; how is it possible to think that a creature who believes that there is a GOD, should, unless he be a Fool, or a Madman, thus audaciously fly in the face of that AWFUL BEING, in whose words we must be assured is all truth, and in whose right hand is all power.

A Prayer

*A Prayer to GOD, that our National CRIMES,
may not bring down National PUNISHMENTS.*

WHILE Justice waves her vengeful hand
Tremendous o'er a guilty land,
Almighty GOD thy awful power,
With fear and trembling, we adore:

Where shall we fly, but to thy feet?
Our only refuge is thy seat;
Thy seat, where potent mercy pleads,
And hurls thy thunder from our heads.

While peace and plenty blest'd our days,
Where was the tribute of thy praise?
Ungrateful race! how have we spent
The blessings which thy goodness lent:

But when distress and wasting war,
With threatening frown thy wrath appear;
Still war and want are but thy slaves,
Nor can destroy when mercy saves:

Look down, O LORD, with pitying eye;
Tho' loud our crimes for vengeance cry;
Let mercy's louder voice prevail,
Nor thy long-suffering patience fail.

Encourag'd by thy sacred word,
May we not plead the blest record,
That when a humbled nation mourns,
Thy rising wrath to pity turns?

O let thy sov'reign grace impart
Contrition to each rocky heart,
And bid sincere repentance flow,
A general undissembled woe!

Fair smiling peace again restore,
With plenty blest th' industrious poor;
And may a happy thankful land
Obedient own thy guardian hand.

F I N I S.

